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ABSTRACT

Social values, educational philosophy, politics, and decision-making are examined in a case study of political influence involving the National Diffusion Network (funded by the Department of Education), which supports the dissemination of exemplary curriculum programs meeting high priority needs. In 1982, 87 directors of ongoing programs were asked to submit projects for review so a decision could be reached about their renewal. Of these, 83 reached the third stage of completion. Donald Senese, the department's assistant secretary for educational research and improvement (appointed by President Reagan), had recently called for "order and discipline" in the schools; now he terminated support for 13 projects, 4 of whose directors brought a suit, charging First Amendment violations. Senese's deposition offers insights into the philosophical orientation of an educator working in a political decision-making capacity. Apparently he had relied not upon the "goal based" assessment approach, but, rather, had utilized a set of sociopolitical principles to develop a list of termination candidates. Project Environment, for example, focused too strongly on environmental problems, while World Religions interfered with individual belief. Educational policy thus shifts with the political process; this document should provide a basis for future study of that process. (KS)

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SOCIAL VALUES, EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY, POLITICS AND CURRICULUM DECISION-MAKING: A CASE STUDY IN TODAY'S DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting
of the American Educational
Research Association

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April 23, 1984

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ERRATA SHEET

1. PAGE 3 LINE 7 ---Should read "Joint Dissemination Review Panel"

2. PAGE 6 LINE 2---Should read "and Representative William Archer of Texas"

3. PAGE 19 LINE 7---Instead of "a Republican majority in Congress" it should read "Republican gains in Congress"

Introduction

In October, 1957, a stunned American public awakened to find that the Soviets had successfully launched an orbiting earth satellite--Sputnik. Having grown up in a world where America was first, it was a bitter pill to swallow. In September, 1958, in response to Sputnik, Congress passed the first of many pieces of legislation affecting education. It was the historic National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958. The preamble expresses the purpose of the Act:

> To strengthen the national defense and to encourage and assist in the expansion and improvement of educational programs to meet critical national needs; and for other purposes.

Although the history of federal education activity can be traced all the way back to the Ordinance of 1785 and the Morrill Acts in the next century, until NDEA, that activity was confined almost exclusively to financial and technical assistance. As America moved into the 1960s, the federal role in education underwent a dramatic shift. Financial and technical assistance were increased substantially but the federal government added a new ingredient. That new ingredient was a loud voice in the formulation of education policy. In fact, in important domains, i.e. race, education for the handicapped, equality of opportunity for the sexes, the policy was formulated in Washington and exported to the local educational agencies for faithful implementation.

To move the states and the local school boards toward implementation, the federal government has relied and continues to

rely, on two strategies---compliance and inducements. Compliance is the capability of the government to muster resources necessary to coerce states and local school districts to adopt federal policies and find ways to implement them. This is generally accomplished through threats or sanctions. Inducements are token or substantial monetary aid and perhaps a package of useful educational knowledge or materials. One version of this inducement strategy has been the federal government's financial support to develop and later disseminate model or exemplary educational programs. Using federal funds, local educational agencies developed, packaged, tried out, tested, modified and finally made the packages available to other schools and agencies. Consistent with the spirit of NDEA, later adopted in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, if the federal government provided the financial support to create and disseminate the programs, it wanted to ensure that the funded programs reflected federal concerns and educational priorities. Thus, opportunity for political and social influences on education can be predicted. In fact, there is no clearer ground from which one can view the political influence on education than in the decisions made about such programs. It is our intent to examine a case study of political influence involving the U.S. Department of Education's National Diffusion Network, a particular political decision-maker in the role of Assistant Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement in the year 1982.

The Case Study

The National Diffusion Network(NDN) was created in 1974 as a

funding agency in the U.S. Office of Education. The purpose of the NDN then and now is to support the dissemination of exemplary curriculum programs to local educational agencies who choose to adopt and implement them in their own setting. The curriculum programs accepted into the National Diffusion Network must, as a pre-condition of that acceptance, receive a "pass" from the Joint Diffusion Review Panel (JDRP). The JDRP, made up of educators, evaluation and measurement specialists as well as department program officers, examines the evidence of effectiveness submitted by the schools desirous of obtaining its approval. This Panel then decides whether the evidence is sufficiently persuasive to demonstrate that the program was effective in the schools in which they were developed and that the program also can be effective in other schools as well. By the beginning of 1981, about 300 programs had received a "pass" from the Panel.

Assuming that a program received validation from the JDRP, it must then compete with other validated programs for limited NDN dissemination funding. Typically, funding is dependent on an assessment of a program's potential to attract interest from schools across the country. The NDN program staff people review the applications submitted by the programs passing JDRP scrutiny. They look for programs that address present and future national education needs where there are few existing NDN programs available to respond to those needs. The programs that have the greatest chance to receive funding are those that promise to meet the perceived needs. The needs identified as high priorities in 1982 were basic skill instruction, early childhood education,

special education, gifted, health and physical education, environmental education, science, career/vocational education, preservice/inservice education, bilingual/migrant education, alternative school programs, adult education, organization and administration, communication and the arts. At the onset of 1981, 139 curriculum programs, classified in one or more of the need areas, were receiving funds to help school districts learn about the programs and to implement them in their schools.

In the Spring of 1982, the booklet, Educational Programs That Work, the official compendium of JDRP approved programs, contained 87 projects that were in a continuing funding category. The NDN program officers had created this category to provide a degree of stability in the network. There was an explicit agreement between NDN program officers and project staffs that all continuing projects that maintained satisfactory performance in meeting the stated goals of the NDN, would be funded until the 1984-85 funding year ended. At that juncture, each project director would have to return to the Joint Diffusion Review Panel and convince the panelists that the project has maintained its effectiveness if there were a desire to continue in the NDN after 1984-85.

Such was the state of affairs as the directors of the 87 continuing projects submitted their renewal applications in December, 1981. Funding decisions were to be announced in April, 1982, after three stages were completed in sequence. First, a group of reviewers were to examine the applicant's submission against the criteria contained in a reporting instrument titled Review for Continuing Applications. The instrument required that

the reviewers respond in writing to such criteria as the adequacy of the information provided in the application for funding, the degree of progress in meeting the NDN goals, changes proposed in the applicant's program for 1982-83, and the accomplishments of the project during 1981-82. Finally, each reviewer responded either positively or negatively in the case of each project to the question, "Is continuation of the grant in the best interest of the government?"

After each program had been examined, a "Summary of Reviewers Comments for Developer/Demonstrator Second Continuation Applications" was prepared and submitted to Dr. Lee Wickline, Director of the National Diffusion Network. When his review was concluded, 83 of the 87 programs that submitted continuing funding applications had survived the first two stages. The fact that these 83 were recommended for continued funding was communicated in a memorandum signed by Wickline dated March 25, 1982. The memorandum was addressed to Dr. Donald J. Senese, the Department of Education's Assistant Secretary For Educational Research and Improvement, whose duties included administration and supervision of the National Diffusion Network, the National Institute of Education, the Office of Libraries and Technologies and the National Center for Education Statistics. Senese's review was to be the final stage in the process.

Senese, a historian by preparation and inclination, had been a senior research associate for the House of Representatives Republican Study Committee before being tapped for a major post in the Department of Education by President Reagan in 1981.

Prior to his tenure as research associate he served as legislative assistant to Senator William Scott of Virginia from 1973-76. His educational experience included the teaching of history at Radford College. He is the author of numerous articles and papers in history, public affairs and education including, "Defender of the Classics" in The Classical Outlook, June. 1973, "Would a Cabinet Level Department of Education Benefit the Education Profession" in Universitas X, January, 1979, "The IRS and the Private Schools:The Power to Tax Involves the Power to Destroy" in Policy Review, Spring, 1979, and "Debunking NEA's Arguments"in Conservative Digest, May, 1979. His professional activities included memberships in the Conservative Historian's Forum, Asia Society and University Professors for Academic Order. He was a member of the advisory board of the Virginia Young Americans for Freedom, a member of the Virginia Right to Life and a member of the advisory board of Concerned Educators Against Forced Unionism. The flavor of his views on education can be discerned from excerpts of his remarks at a recent speaking engagement. In a speech to the participants at the 1982 Conservative Political Action Conference sponsored by the Young Americans for Freedom and the American Conservative Union, Senese attributed the phenomenon of recent school test score declines to "social permissiveness" in the schools. He argued that the problems with the U.S. schools of today include, "lack of values and beliefs, the elevation of slogans without students' (understanding the) content, social permissiveness, and the decline of analytical thought."[1]

He suggested to members of the audience that they get involved to improve education by:

1. urging that the control of education be returned to states and local communities.

2. stressing "order and discipline in the schools."

3. breaking the public monopoly on education.

4. encouraging "conservatives to go into the education field, to look at that as a true mission."

5. getting to know "your state superintendent of education, and find out whether he is elected or appointed; know your local superintendent, what's going on in the schools locally; and know who's on the state legislature's education committee."2

The preceeding review of Senese's background and philosophic orientation is an important backdrop to the decision he made to terminate support of 13 of the projects recommended for funding in the March 25th memorandum from Wickline. This action was taken on April 7, 1982. The directors of each of the 13 projects whose funding was terminated received notification of same through a letter in which Senese concluded that pursuant to the regulations of the Education Department and "After giving careful consideration to your application I have made a determination that the continuation of this project is not in the best interest of the Federal Government."[3]

Not surprisingly, the letters received by the project directors and staffs of the 13 terminated projects resulted in a flurry of activity as explanations were sought from Senese's office and from each project's program officer in the NDN. Apparently, the explanations were not sufficiently persuasive to satisfy all the project directors. The directors of four of the terminated projects brought suit as plaintiffs against Terrell

Bell, Secretary of the Department of Education for the United States, et al, defendants. The four projects who initiated the suit charged that Senese violated their constitutional First Amendment rights by making personal political, social and religious judgments when he decided to terminate cheir previously recommended funding. The central evidence in the case was a deposition by Donald J. Senese taken on May 26, 1982,in the U.S. District Court for New Jersey. Soon after the deposition was taken, Judge Dickinson Debevoise, at the request of the Justice Department, dismissed the suit, ruling that Senese's action was "unreviewable" in legal terms.[4]

The Deposition as a Socio-Political Statement On Curriculum

Although the lawsuit quickly was brushed aside, the information that emerges from the deposition is a treasure trove of insights into the philosophic orientation and value preferences regarding curriculum by an educator working in the role of political decision-maker. Prior to analyzing the rationale advanced by Senese to explain his action in respect to each project, a description of four of the projects discussed during the suit is in order:

1. Project Environment

An interdisciplinary curriculum (science/social science) environmental education designed to prepare students to examine local environmental problems and understand why citizens must develop an environmental ethic based on sound technological choices... A common problem solving model is used as a guide for

examining local problems, weighted between social and purely scientific concerns.

2. The Helping Myself Drug Prevention Program (A Drug Education Program Aimed at Improving Self Concepts) It provides elementary teachers with classroom strategies that encourage open communication between students and teachers. The program approaches drug prevention through enhancing self concept[s] and developing problem solving and decision-making skills.

3. World Religions

A semester length, elective social studies course about religion for high school students. It consists of six instructional units which may be implemented wholly or in part; these include a unit on religious expression and five separate units on the Hindu, Buddhist, Judaic, Christian and Islamic Traditions. It is intended to help students acquire greater awareness, understanding and appreciation of religious diversity and the legitimacy of the various expressions and beliefs.

4. Project Career Choice (A Career Education Program to Reduce Effects of Sex Role Stereotyping)

Project Career Choice aims to expose students to the concepts of growth and change and to make them aware of their needs, skills strengths, aptitudes, feelings, and motivations. The program relates a variety of occupational information to the student's self concept. Emphasis is placed on choosing and examining alternatives in order to make decisions. At the elementary school level, the primary goal of the program is to change students' attitudes toward the world of work and to break down occupational stereotypes. At the upper grade levels, the program aims to increase students' knowledge of the world of work and to align

their occupational choices with their occupational interests, aptitudes, and abilities.[5]

Senese maintained that the reasons for termination of funding in each case involved performance factors as well as judgements about the worth of the programs. However, the persuasiveness of this assertion is reduced because the four projects as well as the other nine that were terminated by Senese had been approved by the panel of reviewers and by Director Wickline. The deposition revealed that Senese had serious reservations about the "intrinsic worth or merit" of the four projects---serious enough to place their continuing funding in jeopardy. Expressing the issue in the parlance of educational evaluation, he chose not to assess the projects using a "goal based" approach. He assumed the role of the "expert judge" who is as concerned about the merits of the goals of a program as he is about the goals themselves. Michael Scriven, a leading proponent of this approach to educational evaluation points out ..."It is obvious that if the goals aren't worth achieving then it is uninteresting how well they are achieved."[6] Unfortunately, the responses given by Senese to a sequence of questions from the plaintiff's attorney do not support a conclusion that he immersed himself in the substance of each project to the extent that would be required to establish his "bona fides" as an "expert judge."

> Q. SO, THAT INSOFAR AS YOU HAD INFORMATION ON THESE 13 PROJECTS YOU HAD IT FROM THE BOOKLET, BOOKLET,FROM CONSULTATIONS WITH DR. WICKLINE AND HIS STAFF, OR FROM DATA DR. WICKLINE AND HIS STAFF SUPPLIED. I ASSUME ALSO THE DATA THAT THE APPLICANT WOULD SUPPLY IN THE FORM OF AN APPLICATION, WOULD ALSO BE INCLUDED.
>
> A. YES, THAT WOULD BE CORRECT.

Q. AND, THAT'S ALL?

A. YES, AS FAR AS THE BASIC SOURCE INFORMATION, YES.

Q. HOW ABOUT LESS THAN THE BASIC INFORMATION? IS THERE ANY OTHER SOURCE INFORMATION WHICH YOU WOULD DESCRIBE AS OTHER THAN BASIC?

A. NO, THAT WOULD BE THE INFORMATION THAT WOULD BE AVAILABLE AND WAS AVAILABLE TO ME WHEN I MADE MY DECISION.7

Thus, we are left with the impression that Senese gave only cursory attention to the materials and activities contained in the projects. Instead, he apparently utilized a set of socio-political principles to develop a list of likely candidates for termination. Presumably, the list was winnowed until the final group of 13 projects were sent their letters of termination.

What were these general principles? How were they applied as Senese considered the wisdom of taking action in each case? There is no record to examine for most of the thirteen terminated projects. However, in respect to the projects that were discussed within the context of the suit against the Department of Education, the deposition contains his explanations as Senese responded to questions from the plaintiffs' attorney. The questioning turned to the factors that Senese used in de-funding Project Environment. Senese indicated that the decision involved consideration of a number of factors including a declining number of adoptions. The plaintiffs' attorney asked Senese to estimate what percentage of the decision was attributable to this factor. Senese replied, "I'D SAY ABOUT 30 PERCENT. "The attorney then refers to the fact that Senese judged the program to be "NONACADEMIC." The attorney asks," WHY?"

A. "BECAUSE I DON'T THINK THAT IT TEACHES THE BASIC

LITERACY SKILLS IN AREAS SUCH AS MATH, SCIENCE, FOREIGN LANGUAGE, READING, OR WRITING THAT WOULD BE ESSENTIAL TO THE STUDENT TO FUNCTION IN SOCIETY. AND ALSO I DO NOT BELIEVE IT IS IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT TO CONTINUE.

Q. WHY IS NOT WITHIN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT?

A. BECAUSE I THINK THE CONTENT AND THAT OF THE COURSE WHICH IS TO TEACH AN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHIC WHICH IS NOT TEACHING ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT ITSELF. I BELIEVE THAT THOSE SUBJECT MATTERS COULD BE COVERED IN OTHER SUBJECT AREAS SUCH AS SCIENCE.

Q. DO YOU KNOW FOR A FACT THAT COURSE DID NOT ENDOW STUDENTS WITH SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE REGARDING THE ENVIRONMENT?

A. THERE MAY HAVE BEEN SOME SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION THAT WAS IMPARTED. IT WAS NOT THE MAJOR PART OF THE COURSE OR THE MAJOR OBJECTIVE OF THE COURSE.

Q, AGAIN, YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THIS COURSE IS DERIVED ENTIRELY FROM THE NDN BOOKLET; IS THAT CORRECT?

A. AND ANY DISCUSSIONS I MAY HAVE HAD WITH DR. WICKLINE

Q. DID YOU HAVE ANY DISCUSSIONS WITH DR. WICKLINE?

A. .....I THINK I ASKED HIM SPECIFICALLY DOES IT TEACH ABOUT ENVIRONMENT OR WAS IT AN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHIC WHICH IS SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

Q. WHAT IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHIC?

A. THAT IS A GOOD QUESTION. I WONDERED ABOUT THAT MYSELF.

Q. DID YOU ASK DR. WICKLINE WHAT HE UNDERSTOOD ENVIRONMENTAL ETHIC TO BE?

A. WELL. HE REFERRED ME TO THE DESCRIPTION. AND ACCORDING TO THIS IT'S TO PREPARE STUDENTS TO EXAMINE LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS AND UNDERSTAND WHY CITI-

ZENS MUST DEVELOP AN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHIC BASED ON SOUND TECHNOLOGICAL CHOICE."

In the case then of Project Environment, Senese was critical of the program's lack of emphasis on the environment as a scientific study and its devotion to the study of environmental problems as well as the creation of a set of values and principles that guide proper conduct toward the environment.

Attention was then directed toward The Helping Myself Drug Prevention Education Program. Again, the plaintiffs' attorney attempted to learn why Senese terminated the project:

> Q. THE PROJECT IS TITLED 'THE HELPING MYSELF DRUG PREVENTION PROGRAM' AND THEN THERE IS A TERSE DESCRIPTION, 'A DRUG PREVENTION EDUCATION PROGRAM AIMED AT IMPROVING SELF CONCEPTS'.
>
> A. YES.
>
> Q. .....
>
> Q. YES, DOESN'T THAT SUGGEST THAT IT IS A DRUG PREVENTION PROGRAM?
>
> A. NO, IT DOES NOT. THE PURPOSE OF THAT IS TO IMPROVE SELF CONCEPTS. ITS NOT TO PREVENT DRUG USE. AND I THINK IF WE GO DOWN TO EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS AND THAT THEY LIST FOUR OBJECTIVES NONE OF WHICH HAVE TO DO WITH DRUG PREVENTION.
>
> Q. .....
>
> A. I THINK IT WAS OBVIOUS FROM JUST THE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND THAT THAT IT WAS NOT DEALING WITH DRUG PREVENTION. THE OBJECTIVE IS STATED VERY CLEARLY AT THE TOP AND I HAD FOUND THOSE IN THE PAST TO BE RELIABLE STATEMENTS OF OBJECTIVES. THE EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS WAS ALSO STATED QUITE CLEARLY.
>
> WHEN YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT FACTUAL KNOWLEDGE ABOUT DRUG USE, IT INCLUDES ATTITUDES TOWARD PROPER USE OF DRUGS. THAT IS NOT DRUG PREVENTION.

Q. ASSUMING THAT THE PROJECT'S CLAIM THAT IMPROVED ATTITUDES DECREASED DRUG USE. ISN'T WHAT THEY ARE CLAIMING?

A. I AM NOT AWARE OF THAT CLAIM, NO.

Q. YOU ARE NOT AWARE THAT THIS IS THE UNDERLYING THRUST OF THE PROJECT, TO IMPROVE ATTITUDES WHICH, IN TURN, WOULD IMPROVE OR WOULD IMPROVE THE PICTURE OF DRUG ABUSE IN THE PARTICULAR SCHOOL IN WHICH THAT COURSE IS GIVEN?

A. NO, I THINK IT'S CLEAR THAT THEY WANT TO CHANGE AN ATTITUDE TO PROVIDE A FACTUAL KNOWLEDGE ABOUT DRUG USE, DECISION-MAKING ABILITY, ALSO IMPROVING ATTITUDES TOWARD PROPER USE OF DRUGS, AND INCLUDING STUDENTS' FEELINGS OF SELF WORTH. AND THESE FEELINGS OF SELF-WORTH IS PUT UP AS THE MAJOR OBJECTIVE OF THE PROJECT.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY KNOWLEDGE REGARDING WHETHER OR NOT IF YOU IMPROVE STUDENTS FEELINGS OF SELF-WORTH THAT WOULD OR WOULD NOT TEND TO DIMINISH THEIR INCLINATION TOWARD SELF ABUSE?

A. I THINK ITS A DEBATABLE POINT. BUT I THINK YOU COULD GET MUCH BETTER RESULTS BY TEACHING THE HARMFUL USE OF DRUGS RATHER THAN TO ATTEMPT TO IMPROVE THE SELF CONCEPTS.

Q. ON WHAT DO YOU BASE THAT VIEW?

A. I THINK THE VIEW IS BASED ON IF YOU WANT TO DISCOURAGE USE OF SOME PARTICULAR DRUG OR ITEM AND THAT, AND YOU FEEL IT'S HARMFUL, YOU EMPHASIZE THE HARMFUL EFFECTS.

Q. THAT'S YOUR PERSONAL VIEW, THOUGH. HAVE YOU EVER STUDIED DRUG ABUSE, METHODS OF CURBING IT?

A. YES, I HAVE DONE SOME STUDYING ON THAT. BUT I THINK SOMETHING LIKE THAT IS SELF-OBVIOUS. IT SEEMS JUST TO PRESENT FACTUAL KNOWLEDGE AND IMPROVING ATTITUDES AND THAT IS NOT ENOUGH TO ACTUALLY PREVENT DRUG ABUSE."

Thus, in the case of The Helping Myself Drug Education Program, Senese is critical of drug education programs that do not emphasize the harmful aspects of drug use, but rather attempt to prevent or reduce drug abuse through teaching factual know-

ledge about drug use, and/or attempt to enhance students' self-concepts and to increase their decision-making ability.

Moving on to the third program discussed extensively during the time Senese made his deposition, attention was directed to World Religions.

> Q. ...IF I RECALL YOUR TESTIMONY CORRECTLY EARLIER, YOU INDICATED THAT THAT COURSE IN YOUR JUDGEMENT OR TO YOUR KNOWLEDGE WAS TEACHING RELIGION; IS THAT CORRECT?
>
> A. I SAID THAT THAT WAS NOT A PROPER AREA AND THAT FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO BE INVOLVED IN TEACHING RELIGION OR TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION.
>
> Q. YOUR VIEW IS THAT IT INAPPROPRIATE FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO FUND COMPARATIVE RELIGION COURSES, FOR EXAMPLE?
>
> A. ...I THINK ANY TIME THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FUNDS A PROGRAM THAT CONTAINS A JUDGEMENTAL VALUE ON RELIGION, IT IS IMPROPER FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO BE INVOLVED.
>
> Q. DID YOU EVER TAKE A COMPARATIVE RELIGION COURSE OR ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH SUCH COURSES?
>
> A. I AM FAMILIAR WITH THE COURSES, YES.
>
> Q. DO THEY EXPRESS VALUES ON THE PARTICULAR RELIGIONS THAT THEY TEACH ABOUT?
>
> A. VERY DEFINITELY.
>
> Q. IN WHAT WAY?
>
> A. THE JUDGEMENTAL VALUE IN THAT IS A VALUE OF RELATIVISM, THAT ALL RELIGIONS ARE THE SAME.
>
> Q. I AM SORRY. WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT? BEING JEWISH I CAN SEE GREAT DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN MY RELIGION AND CHRISTIANITY.
>
> A. WELL, THE RELIGIONS ARE BEING STUDIED AS OF EQUAL WORTH. CHRISTIANITY IS A TRADITION, THE JEWISH FAITH IS A TRADITION, BUDDHISM IS A TRADITION, MOHAMMADISM IS A TRADITION. I THINK IT AVOIDS THE VERY ESSENCE AND THAT OF THE MEANING OF RELIGION, WHICH IS THE SENSE AND THAT OF COMMITMENT.
>
> Q. YOU ARE SAYING, IF I UNDERSTAND YOU CORRECTLY, THAT THESE COURSES TREAT EACH RELIGION AS THOUGH IT IS

EQUALLY WORTHWHILE AND THAT IS THE REASON WHY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHOULDN'T FUND IT?

A. ... IT IS MY OPINION THAT MOST OF THE PEOPLE WHO WOULD SUBSCRIBE TO A PARTICULAR RELIGION WOULD BELIEVE THAT THEIR RELIGION WOULD BE THE TRUE OR ONLY RELIGION, AND THAT BY TEACHING THE DIVERSITY OF RELIGION AND ALSO TEACHING THE LEGITIMACY OF VARIOUS EXPRESSIONS AND BELIEFS THAT WOULD BE AN INTERFERENCE WITH THAT INDIVIDUAL BELIEF.

Q. HOW ELSE DO STUDENTS ACQUIRE, IF THEY DON'T GET A SENSE FOR OTHER RELIGIONS, ACQUIRE A SENSE OF THE DIVERSITY OF RELIGIONS IN THIS COUNTRY THROUGH EDUCATION OR AN EDUCATIONAL PROCESS?

A. I THINK THEY CAN ACQUIRE IT THROUGH HOME TRAINING. I THINK THEY CAN ACQUIRE IT AND THAT THROUGH MAYBE TRAINING IN THEIR OWN CHURCH. I THINK THEY CAN HAVE THE OPTION TO TAKE MAYBE INDIVIDUAL COURSES IN THAT AT A COMMUNITY CENTER...

Q. DO YOU THINK IT IS A ILLEGITIMATE GOAL OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMMENT TO ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO UNDERSTAND THAT IN THIS COUNTRY THERE IS A DIVERSITY OF RELIGION AND A DIVERSITY OF BELIEFS?

A. I THINK IT IS INCONSISTENT WITH THE GOVERNMENT TO PROMOTE ANY PARTICULAR VIEW OF RELIGION.

Q. EVEN A VIEW THAT SAYS THERE ARE RELIGIONS, THERE ARE A LOT OF RELIGIONS, AND THEY DIFFER IN CERTAIN WAYS?

A. WELL, I THINK THAT'S OBVIOUS. BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT THE COURSE IS DOING. IT'S TEACHING, AND I QUOTE AGAIN FROM THE DESCRIPTION AND THAT, IT'S TEACHING THE 'LEGITIMACY OF THE VARIOUS EXPRESSIONS AND BELIEFS.' THE LEGITIMACY IMPLIES A CERTAIN VALIDITY TO THE OTHER BELIEFS...

Senese is arguing in terminating <u>World Religions</u> that it is not proper for the Federal Government to be involved in teaching about the world's major religions. He expresses concerns about the implied support for "moral relativism", in that, teaching about religions other than the child's own religion extends to them an aura of legitimacy and equal worth. He concludes that teaching about other religions interferes with individual belief and thus, is not in the best interest of the Federal Government.

The last of the four terminated projects to be discussed during the deposition was Project Career Choice. In this sequence of questions and answers the key issue again revolves around the nature and importance of "academics" and "basic literacy" and their place in the schools.

Q. ...AGAIN, ...YOU INDICATED THAT THE PROGRAM WAS NONACADEMIC, IF I RECALL CORRECTLY.

A. THAT'S CORRECT.

Q. WHERE DID YOU DERIVE YOUR UNDERSTANDING THAT THE PROGRAM WAS NONACADEMIC IN NATURE?

A. I THINK FROM THE OUTLINE OF THE PROGRAM ITSELF.... THE WHOLE DESCRIPTION GIVES US THAT INFORMATION. YOU MAY WANT TO CHECK THE SECOND PARAGRAPH WHERE IT TALKS ABOUT THE EMPHASIS IS PLACED ON CHOOSING AND EXAMINING THE ALTERNATIVES IN ORDER TO MAKE DECISIONS. AT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEVEL THE PRIMARY GOAL OF THE PROGRAM IS TO CHANGE STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARD THE WORLD OF WORK AND TO BREAK DOWN OCCUPATIONAL STEREOTYPES. THE PROGRAM AIMS TO INCREASE STUDENT KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD OF WORK AND TO ALIGN THEIR OCCUPATIONAL INTERESTS, ATTITUDES AND ABILITIES AND THAT. I DO NOT SAY THAT THOSE ARE ACADEMIC GOALS. THEY DON'T INCREASE BASIC LITERACY IN SUCH AREAS AS READING, WRITING, SCIENCE, MATH OR FOREIGN LANGUAGE OR TO ASSIST SOMEONE TO FUNCTION IN THE WORLD....IT DEALS WITH ATTITUDES...THIS IS NOT A SKILL ACQUIRING COURSE.

Q. YOU KNOW THAT THERE WERE NO SKILLS TAUGHT IN THIS COURSE?

A. I THINK BY THE DESCRIPTION AND THAT IT IS CLEAR THERE WAS NOT...

Q. LET ME REFER YOU TO THE FIRST PARAGRAPH UNDER THE LABEL 'DESCRIPTION'...[THE] ' MATERIALS COMBINE READING, WRITING, VERBAL, AUDIO VISUAL, SIMULATION GAMING AND KINESTHETIC LEARNING EXPERIENCES.' WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? IS THAT NONACADEMIC?

A. I THINK YOU HAVE TO LOOK AT THE WHOLE CONTEXT. AND THIS IS WHAT I EXPLAINED EARLIER, WHERE YOU MAY HAVE READING AND WRITING AND THAT AS COMPONENT OF A PARTICULAR PROJECT WITHOUT ANY JUDGEMENT ON HOW EFFECTIVE THAT READING AND WRITING TRAINING WAS....THE EMPHASIS IS PUT ON...'SELF-AWARENESS, CAREER AWARENESS AND DECISION-MAKING ARE THE

THREADS THAT WEAVE THE PROJECT COMPONENTS TOGETHER"....

The crux of the disagreement over "academics" and "non-academics" as illustrated in the sequence of questions is the proportion of time and attention the program appears to allot to "literacy activity" defined as study of "reading, writing, science, math or foreign language." To Senese, programs that emphasize such processes as "examining alternatives, changing attitudes and aligning choices do not qualify as "academic content." Furthermore, Senese seems to use the additional criterion that any literacy activity imbedded in a given program must be evaluated for its effectiveness if such activity is to count as "academics."

Conclusion

The fact that curriculum decision-making and politics are intimately involved at all levels of education is no surprise. That a decision maker's social values and philosophic orientation affect his political decisions about education also is not startling. There can be no doubt that the leader of the party in power can and does use his office to further his political viewpoint. Nor would anyone debate whether or not he should. We accept as fact the reality of the political process. The viewpoint that a political candidate is elected because of his position is clearly understood, and that he perceives his election as a mandate to implement this position is also accepted. Furthermore, it is to be expected that this person will see to it that his appointees share a similar point of view. However, this

means that the federal role in curriculum-making will definitely bear the political stamp of the standard bearer. The case study of the termination of the 13 projects by Assistant Secretary Senese provides researchers with an example of the interplay of these influences.

The overwhelming victory of a conservative president coupled with a Republican majority in Congress appeared to be a mandate for change, and on the top of the list is education. Specifically, the record contained in the deposition reveals the force of the conservative education agenda on Senese's curriculum decision-making as it directed him to identify suitable projects for termination. Grouping the decisions in the cases of the four projects discussed in the deposition together, his preference for cognitive learning over affective learning is clear as is his preference for basic skill instruction in math, science, foreign language, reading, and writing in contrast to courses and units that have been forged out of "life adjustment" or "reconstructionist" approaches to curriculum. In fact, his disdain for favored terminology of the progressive movement in education (ethical development, decision-making, self-concept enhancement, changing attitudes, improving self-worth, values education, appreciation of cultural and religious diversity, examining alternatives, self-awareness, career awareness, etc.) is a theme that can be found in each of his decisions. Furthermore, the termination of the Helping Myself Drug Prevention Education Program exemplifies the principle expressed by conservative critics that "teaching about drugs and enhancing children's self concepts" does not prevent drug abuse. As Senese

expresses it, "I think you could get much better results by teaching the harmful use of drugs." The termination of World Religions surfaces the conservative critic's opposition to moral /value relativism - that is, teaching about values, morals, ethics without inculcating the societal position in regard to them. Senese, and other conservative critics, would prefer that the public school concentrate their attention on intellectual pursuits and leave provocative, controversial value-laden issues to home and church. However, the debate over spoken prayer in school suggests that there are exceptions to this rule if the societal perspective in the issue is clear and parallels the conservative viewpoint.

What we have attempted here is not to belabor the point that educational policy shifts with the political process, nor are we aiming to reinforce the idea that education is a part of the political process. Our purpose is to document, through a case study, several specific instances that clearly demonstrate that fact. The literature contains references to these political influences in overly general terms. We believe that scholars studying federal policy making in education can benefit from working with original source data. In this instance, the political winds are shifting from a liberal to a conservative direction. In the past, and undoubtedly in some future time they will shift once more. It is not the direction of the shift that is important, but rather the manner in which it occurs. The dissemination of this case study should provide a basis for future study and should lead educational scholars to a clearer

understanding of the political policy-making process as it relates to education.

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